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Another blow to SALT II

The government of Turkey dealt another blow last week to President Carter's unsupported assertion that the SALT II (arms control) treaty with the Soviet Union can be adequately verified.

Previously, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director Stansfield Turner, a Carter appointee, had testified — to the dismay of his boss — that it could take the United States as long as five years to recover the intelligence capacity lost when the new revolutionary government in Iran closed down U.S. monitoring stations. The electronic outposts had been used to check up on missile developments in Soviet central Asia.

Because of the Iranian shutdown, the use of reconnaissance planes assumed new importance in SALT II verification.

Now the Turkish government has announced it would allow U.S. reconnaissance planes to fly over Turkey to check Soviet compliance with SALT II only if Moscow did not object.

The Turkish announcement amounts to giving the Soviets veto power over U.S. flights. The reconnaissance plane involved

is the U-2 (the same kind that was shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960 when the pilot, Gary Powers, was captured, charged with espionage and later exchanged), and it is inconceivable the Soviet Union would give its permission for flyovers which could not only check on SALT II compliance but other military developments, as well.

Officials speculate that Turkey's stance was a calculated effort to obtain the best possible deal on the foreign military aid package which passed the U.S. Senate Tuesday. The senators voted to restore a \$50 million grant to Turkey, in addition to approving \$400 million in economic and military credits.

But even with this action, there is no assurance that Turkey will be any less unpredictable than it has been in recent months. The nation faces a volatile internal situation, which seemingly dictates that the shaky Turkish government not do anything to upset the Soviet Union.

The episode demonstrates that if SALT II verification depends in any way upon Turkey, it is in a lot of trouble.